

# HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE EARLIEST YEARS, 1916 through the 1920s

*MISSION: To improve lives through the caring power of community.*

In 1887, a Denver woman, a priest, two ministers and a rabbi got together. It sounds like the beginning of a bad joke, but they didn't walk into a bar; what they did was recognize the need to work together in new ways to make their city a better place. They created the nation's first united campaign in Denver, raising funds for 10 health and welfare agencies and beginning a movement that would later become United Way.

When what is now United Way began in St. Joseph back in 1916, we were called the St. Joseph Federation for Charity and Philanthropy, following in the footsteps of the Denver group. The agency began here as a way for our community to come together to improve lives in a united way, a more overarching way than individual churches, synagogues, civic groups and agencies could do on their own. A big part of the St. Joseph Federation for Charity and Philanthropy's work was to raise money to share with social service agencies already making a difference in lives that could use some extra financial support from the community.

The first campaign in June 1916 raised \$17,404.03 in pledges and contributions. Eight local charities received shares of the funding; all but one of the initial agencies provided either health or children's services. By 1923, the Federation responded to pressure for a more inclusive campaign, a trend known nationally as the Community Chest movement. Six new partner agencies entered the Federation, adding recreation, character building and emergency assistance to a growing range of services.

Fundraising goals in the early years fluctuated up and down, apparently depending on the economic conditions in the community and the needs for providing social services.

In 1924, N. S. Hillyard accepted the monumental position as the first volunteer to head the campaign, aiming to raise \$140,000 and actually bringing in \$135,468.

**Which current United Way of Greater St. Joseph Partner Agencies were funded by United Way in the earliest years?**

- 1916 FAMILY GUIDANCE CENTER
- 1916 Faithfully Serving People  
**InterServ**
- 1923 American Red Cross of Northwest Missouri
- 1923 BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA  
PONY EXPRESS COUNCIL
- 1923 THE SALVATION ARMY
- 1923 eliminating racism  
empowering women  
**ywca**
- 1923 the **Y**

**Photos from United Way archives . . .**



*A portrait of life in the Midwest from 1918.*



*We understand that, in the earliest years, women often campaigned door-to-door for what is now United Way.*



*A campaign poster from 1920. \*Note: we're not sure if this is from St. Joseph or another community with a similar campaign.*

**TRIVIA QUESTION:**  
Can you guess any of the original eight local charities funded by the St. Joseph Federation for Charity and Philanthropy?  
*See back for answer.*

# MORE DETAILS FROM 1916 through the 1920s . . .

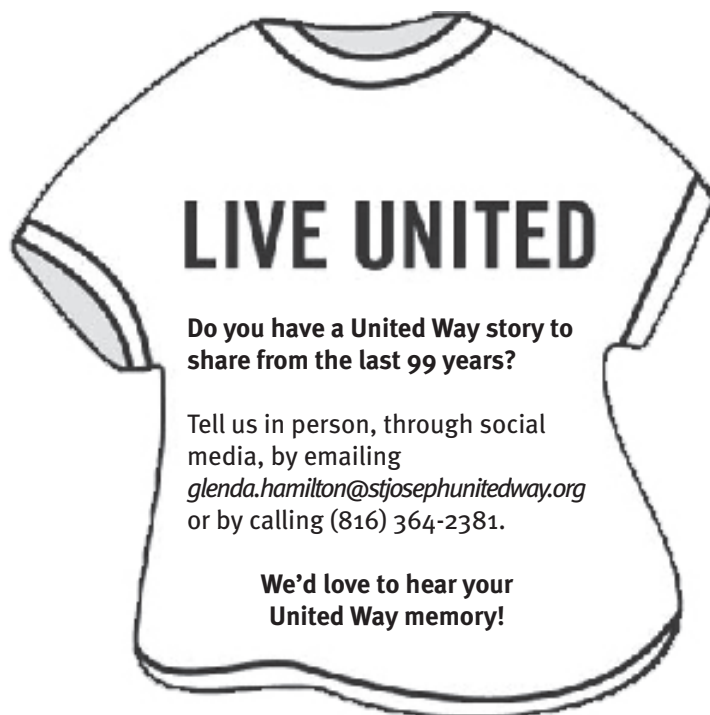
## Local Volunteer Leadership Is a Long Tradition

From early in United Way of Greater St. Joseph's history, the agency was overseen by a volunteer Board of Directors, and the fundraising campaign was steered by a volunteer who led the charge for helping the community raise dollars to invest in social services to improve local lives. Records of leadership details begin in 1924. Do you recognize any names from the 1920s?

Date	Campaign Chair	Goal	Raised
1924	N. S. Hillyard	\$140,000	\$135,468
1925	N. S. Hillyard	\$130,000	\$125,690
1926	Charles Waddles	\$141,125	\$123,762
1927	N. S. Hillyard	\$135,000	\$127,284
1928	W. J. Adams	?	\$121,351
1929	C. A. Semrad	\$135,000	\$123,537

James E. Cox is the first recorded volunteer Board President of St. Joseph Federation for Charities and Philanthropy (the agency that became United Way of Greater St. Joseph). He served as president from 1924 through 1929.

*\*Note: Records are scarce from 1916 to 1923.*



### TRIVIA ANSWER from question on front:

The original eight local charities funded by the St. Joseph Federation for Charity and Philanthropy (now United Way of Greater St. Joseph) were:

- 1) Associated Charities Work Room
- 2) Baby Welfare Association
- 3) Humane Society
- 4) Riverside Home
- 5) Sheltering Arms (*now Family Guidance Center*)
- 6) Tuberculosis Society
- 7) Visiting Nurses Association
- 8) Wesley House (*now InterServ*)

## An excerpt from United Way's 1991 Annual Report regarding the agency's earliest years . . .

From the very beginning, the Federation expected results. Budget records from 1918 contained detailed service breakdowns. The Baby Welfare Association had furnished nursing and medical care for 1,124 babies and dispensed 15,684 quarts of milk. The Humane Society, which at that time handled cases of "children such as are neglected in various ways by sending them out to beg and to go to all sorts of places at nighttime," investigated 974 complaints of abuse and neglect. The Society had, moreover, checked out dance and pool halls "62 times." The Visiting Nurses Association not only cited client load, but even listed patients' outcomes, including 69 who died.

The Federation set a high standard of accountability for itself as well. As the first auditor noted in his report, "I find that records are kept in a remarkably neat and intelligent manner."



United Way  
of Greater St. Joseph  
stjosephunitedway.org